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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

# Memorandum



## THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600  
29 April 1965

PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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HIGHLIGHTS

Peiping is continuing its efforts to sabotage the proposed Cambodian conference. Chou En-lai, in a speech today, declared that the conference could not be used to discuss the Vietnam question; in any international conference on Indochina, Chou asserted, only the National Liberation Front can represent the South Vietnamese people. Meanwhile, the DRV is continuing its efforts to bolster its defenses.

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:  
Heavy personnel losses have reportedly been sustained by the Viet Cong in the opening phase of the government's combined amphibious - airborne assault operation in Kien Hoa Province (Para. 1). An ARVN search-and-destroy operation in Vinh Long Province has resulted in two Americans killed and one wounded, in addition to a significant number of Vietnamese and Viet Cong killed and wounded (Para. 2). The government's large-scale 27-day highway clearing operation in Binh Dinh Province has been terminated with favorable Viet Cong casualty results (Para. 4).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:  
Australia's announcement that it will send a battalion to South Vietnam has coincided with press reports from Saigon alleging some uneasiness among South Vietnam's generals over the introduction of additional foreign troops (Para. 1). Buddhist leader Tri Quang has implied that the Buddhists may promote an anti-French campaign in South Vietnam, and may also formally ask for a cease-fire during the two-day celebration of Buddha's birthday in May (Para. 4).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:  
Nine armed reconnaissance missions were flown on 29 April, but results were limited because of poor weather conditions in most target areas (Paras. 1-3).

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V. Communist Political Developments: Chou En-lai, in a speech today, declared that the proposed Cambodian conference could not be used to discuss the Vietnam question. He also asserted that only the National Liberation Front can represent the South Vietnamese people at any conference on Indochina (Para. 1).

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[REDACTED] Soviet officials continue to take a cautious attitude toward the proposed Cambodian conference (Para. 5).

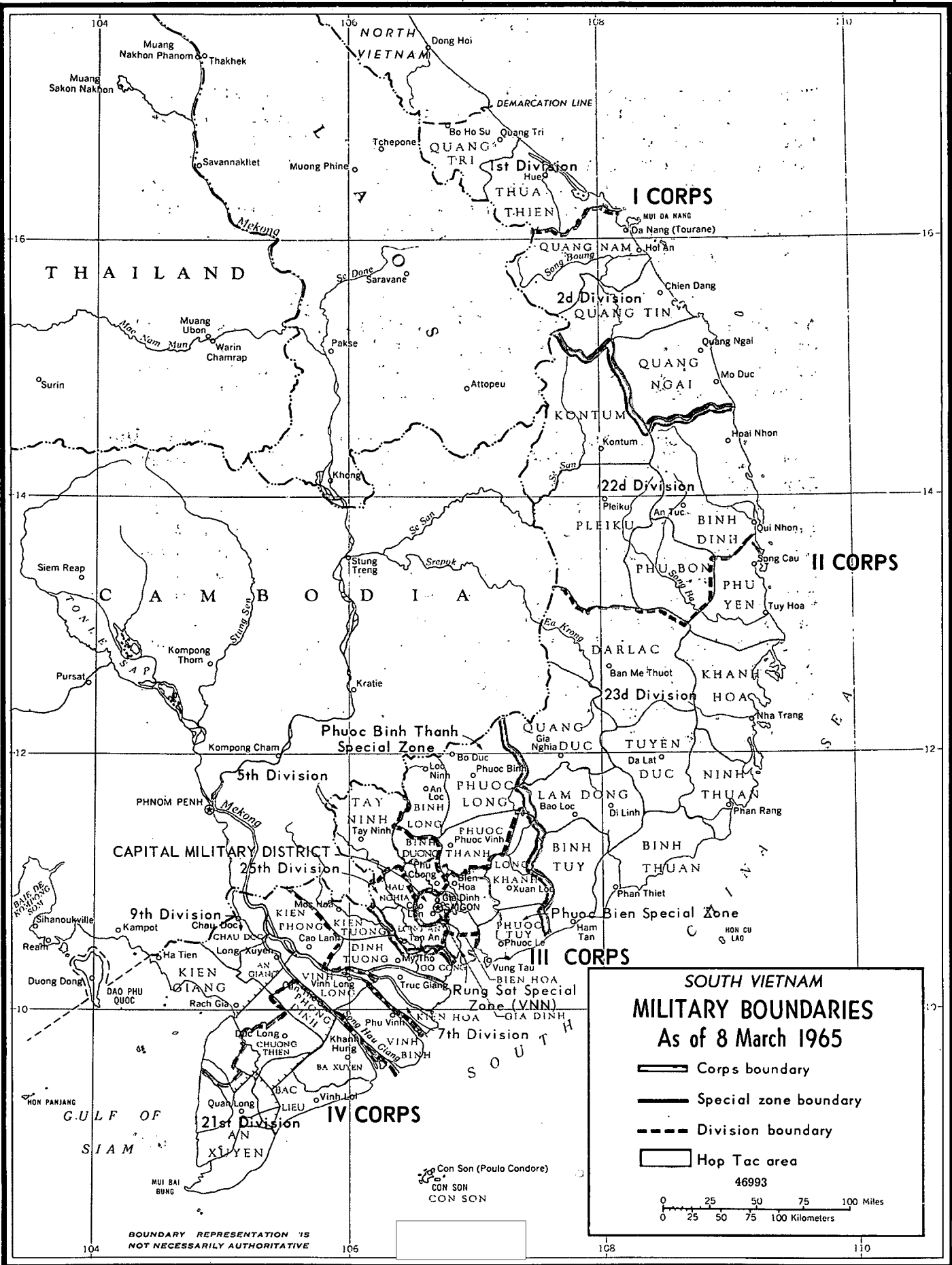
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## I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. The press reports that 86 Viet Cong were killed and 34 captured in the opening phase of a combined amphibious and air assault by units of the Vietnamese Army's Seventh Division against a suspected guerrilla training base in the Mekong Delta province of Kien Hoa. Friendly losses so far are unofficially placed at four wounded. The operation is continuing.

2. According to American military spokesmen, two US Army officers were killed and a third wounded yesterday while accompanying South Vietnamese troops on a search-and-destroy operation which made contact with an estimated Viet Cong company in Vinh Long Province. In addition, 12 government troops were killed and 35 wounded, while the Communists reportedly lost 18 killed.

3. MACV has confirmed and amplified yesterday's press reports that an estimated reinforced Viet Cong battalion attacked a Vietnamese Ranger company outpost in Hau Nghia Province on 28 April, while simultaneously placing 81-mm. mortar fire on a prisoner rehabilitation center in the province capital of Bao Trai. Friendly losses at the Ranger post were 35 killed, 16 wounded, and 11 missing, along with an undetermined number of weapons. At Bao Trai, seven prisoners and one ARVN soldier were killed, and 30 prisoners and six ARVN soldiers wounded. There were no US casualties. A flareship and armed helicopters supported the friendly forces, and a two-company ground reaction force was dispatched to the area. A two-battalion pursuit operation was subsequently initiated, but no contact with the Viet Cong has been reported.

4. The government's large-scale 27-day highway clearing operation in Binh Dinh Province (1-27 April) with a favorable casualty ratio has been terminated. Viet Cong losses are confirmed as 231 killed, 12 captured, and 107 weapons seized. ARVN forces sustained casualties of five killed and 36 wounded in their effort to reopen National Highway One.

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5. An ARVN search-and-destroy operation initiated in Quang Nam Province on 27 April against two main force Viet Cong companies has produced initially favorable results, with enemy losses to date listed as 26 killed, 15 captured, and eight weapons seized. Government losses thus far are one wounded.

6. MACV's military report for 27 April shows 31 Communist-initiated incidents, 11 of which occurred during the reporting period. In Binh Duong Province, the Viet Cong fired 21 rounds of 81-mm. mortar on Ben Cat district capital, killing one ARVN defender and wounding 18. An unknown number of Communist guerrillas, equipped with 60-mm. mortars, attacked a Regional Forces post in Phong Dinh Province, with friendly casualties listed as five killed and 21 wounded. In Quang Tri Province, the Viet Cong ambushed a government jeep, wounding five Popular Forces soldiers and seizing four weapons. A "Wickham Trolley" (railroad handcar) platoon was mined and fired on in Khanh Hoa Province, with two soldiers wounded and one rail and ten cross-ties damaged. Small arms harassing fire was placed on government outposts in Chau Doc and Bac Lieu provinces, and on a jeep and a village in Bien Hoa Province.

7. Government ground operations of battalion strength or larger declined on 27 April from 21 to 20 in progress, with eight initiated and nine terminated. The operations conducted in Binh Dinh and Quang Nam provinces (discussed in Paras. 3 and 4) produced the most significant confirmed results.

8. Company-size or smaller operations conducted on 27 April increased to 2,491. Thirteen contacts were made with the Viet Cong, with guerrilla losses listed as 70 killed, one captured, 41 suspects detained, and 15 weapons. Government forces sustained losses of seven killed, 19 wounded, one missing and six weapons.

9. Over-all VNAF/USAF activity reflected a sharp decline during the reporting period, particularly in terms of the number of close air support,

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air cover, photoreconnaissance, and interdiction missions flown. Pilot reports from combat air operations conducted throughout the four corps areas on 27 April estimate 18 Viet Cong killed, and 113 structures, three bridges, and 12 sampans destroyed.

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## II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Australia announced today that it was sending a battalion of troops to South Vietnam in "the near future." The Western press in Saigon, meanwhile, notes indications of some sensitivity among South Vietnamese generals to the increasing numbers of American and other foreign troops. An unnamed general is quoted as saying that this leaves the South Vietnamese vulnerable to Communist anticolonial propaganda.

2. The military board of inquiry into the corruption charges levied against suspended naval commander Admiral Cang reportedly has found him guilty of "negligence and poor management"; however, Commander in Chief Minh intends to have the findings reviewed by the justice minister. Minh also reportedly intends to suspend the four subordinate naval officers who rebelled against Cang from their commands as a disciplinary measure.

3. With regard to Quat's proposals to abolish Minh's position, a confidant of marine commander General Khang reports that the latter favors bringing back General Khanh to fill the new top military post. Although Khang claims that Premier Quat is "not unsympathetic" to bringing Khanh back, it seems unlikely that Quat would actually consider such a step; he would risk antagonizing the Catholics even further, and would also confront himself with a potential political rival.

4. Press reports from Saigon indicate a possible revival of student demonstrations there against French espousal of a neutralist solution for South Vietnam. There were similar demonstrations in 1964. A US consular officer in Hue, in discussing with Buddhist leader Tri Quang a similarly developing anti-French campaign in Da Nang, elicited comments which suggest that the Buddhists, and Tri Quang, intend to promote and direct such

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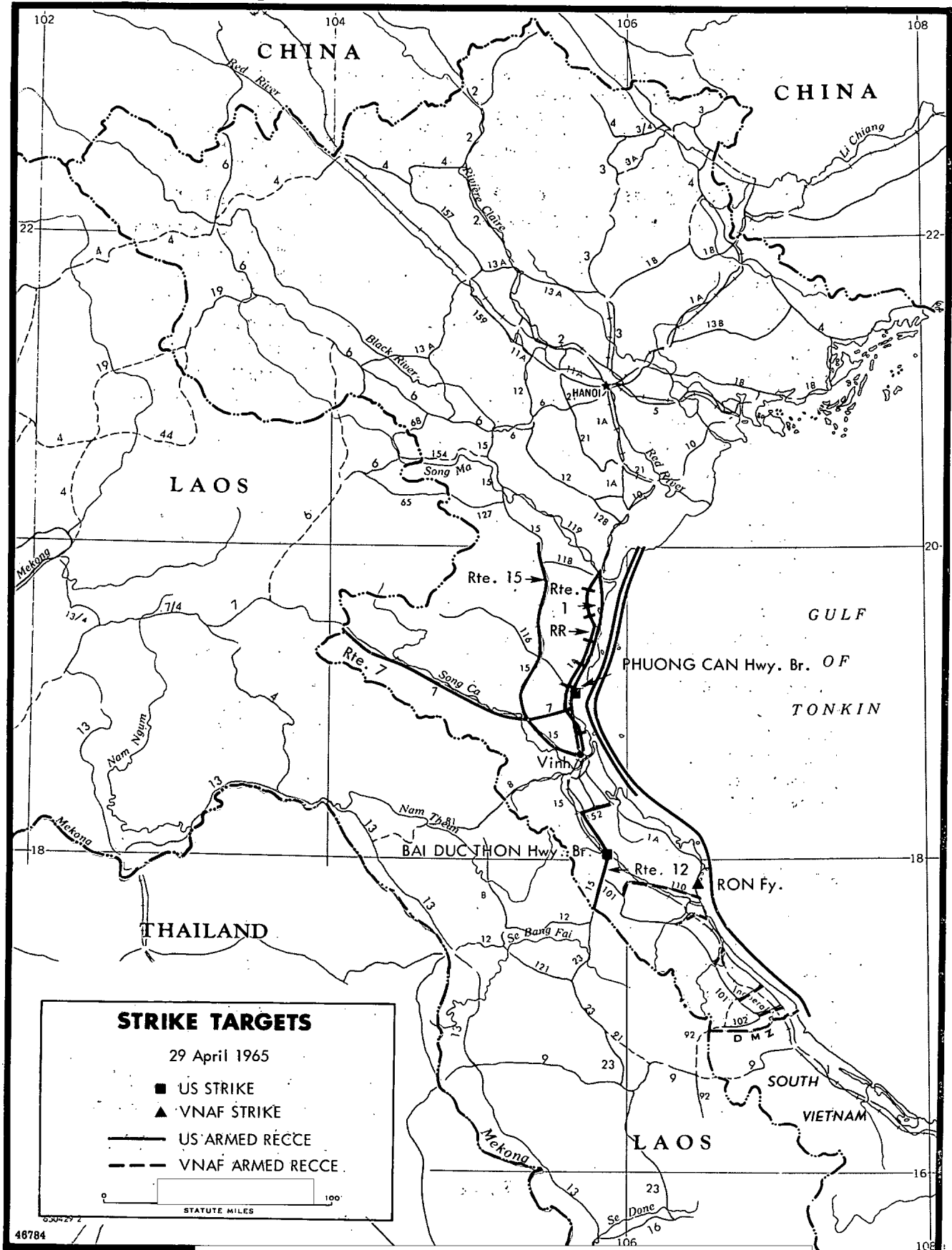
a campaign. Quang also stated that he personally would determine whether the Buddhists formally asked for a cease-fire during Buddha's birthday celebrations on 14-15 May. Implying that such a request should not be considered cause for alarm, Quang described it as a "matter of principle, like your Christmas."

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NORTH VIETNAM.



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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. Nine US and VNAF armed reconnaissance missions were attempted on 29 April, but poor weather hampered visibility and affected results in most target areas. No aircraft were lost.

2. An unknown amount of damage was inflicted by US planes on a newly constructed bridge near Tho Vinh on Route 1. The south approach to the Phoung Can bridge was cratered. One span of this bridge is still down from strikes on 9 April. A mission along Route 7 from Phu Dien to Barthelemy Pass cut and cratered the road and destroyed one truck. During VNAF armed reconnaissance of lateral roads between Routes 1 and 101 from Ron to the DMZ, the north ferry ramp at Ron and a large barracks nearby were destroyed.

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5. A recent study by CIA's Office of Research and Reports indicates that the destruction of and extensive damage done to a number of railroad and road bridges in the southern part of the DRV by US and South Vietnamese air strikes has disrupted the normal pattern of transportation service in that area. The effect of this destruction on the over-all economy of North Vietnam, however, is estimated in the study to be minor.

6. The destruction of the bridges is believed to have made the rail line between the Thanh Hoa area

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and Vinh inoperable. It also has increased the time required for truck movements, and has reduced the capacity of the roads affected. It may thus cause some shift to sea transportation.

7. Increased use of coastal shipping can accommodate the normal economic traffic between the northern and southern parts of the country. Military supplies that are believed to have been moving south by railroad as far as Vinh also can be moved either by coastal shipping at considerable increases in time, or by the use of about 100 trucks in addition to those that have been used in the past. The southern part of the DRV accounts for only a small share of North Vietnam's industrial and agricultural output. [redacted]

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9. [redacted]

[redacted] the local population is becoming increasingly aware of the air strikes against the DRV. As the strikes have continued, the regime has been forced to give its populace expanded information on them. This has resulted, [redacted] in generating a sense of uncertainty among the populace. [redacted] the people are not afraid, and are not pressing the regime for a settlement. [redacted] popular reaction to the strikes may be "grim determination to continue the fight."

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Chou En-lai, in a speech today in Peiping, made the first authoritative Chinese comment on Prince Sihanouk's 23-24 April statements on a Cambodian conference. Chou declared that the Chinese Government fully supported the Cambodian position that the conference could not be used to discuss the Vietnam question. He also took the hardest position on the Front's participation in an international conference yet stated by any of the Communist powers. Chou asserted that at any international conference on Indochina "only the National Liberation Front" can represent the South Vietnamese people, as the "puppet regime" in Saigon is in no way qualified to do this.

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5. Soviet officials continue to avoid elaborating on Moscow's attitude toward a Cambodian conference. Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov told British Ambassador Trevelyan on 27 April that the question of a joint co-chairmen appeal had been referred to the "government" and that he did not know when an answer would be forthcoming. Kuznetsov noted that the Cambodians seemed to be changing their minds about the desirability of such a conference.

6. Ambassador Kohler has commented that a 27 April Moscow TV program drew the "grimmiest picture" yet of the Vietnamese situation in terms of propaganda beamed at the Soviet public. A Pravda commentary on 28 April went so far as to suggest that the American people were being falsely led to believe that the US could engage in a nuclear war in Africa or Asia without a nuclear threat to the US itself. On 29 April, however, a semiofficial Pravda "commentator" article took a more moderate approach in criticizing Secretary Rusk's 23 April speech, simply claiming that US "aggression" in Indochina and international law are incompatible.

7. The cessation of bombings against the DRV reportedly was the only precondition to peace talks on the Vietnam problem mentioned by North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong in a conversation he had with one of Sihanouk's entourage in Djakarta last week. The conversation was held between Pham Van Dong and Charles Meyer, Sihanouk's press adviser, [redacted]

[redacted] Meyer, who is pro-Communist in his leanings, is reported to have emphasized that during his conversation with Pham Van Dong, the premier made no mention of the previous DRV demand that all US troops be withdrawn before talks would be considered.

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8. Actually North Vietnam, in its position on talks as spelled out by Pham Van Dong in an 8 April report to the DRV National Assembly, did not specify either the withdrawal of US troops or a cessation of attacks on North Vietnam as a precondition for discussions. Although Dong listed four categories of demands, including both of the above points, he insisted only that this "stand" is the "basis" for the "soundest" political solution to the Vietnam problem, and that "recognition" on this "basis" could make possible the convening of a conference along the pattern of the 1954 Geneva Conference.

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